

C O M M U N I T Y N E W S

JSC co-ops visit local high schools

By Kylie Moritz

Each spring and fall the cooperative education (co-op) students venture out past the main gate of JSC to influence and encourage high school students to pursue higher education and to focus on math and science classes.

A committee of volunteer co-ops was set up in January to begin organizing the High School Outreach Program for this spring. The committee was responsible for choosing the high school, making arrangements for the co-op visit, organizing presentation groups and checking out space flight hardware.

This year's committee was led by Janna Althaus, a co-op from Texas A&M University. Althaus took time from her busy schedule in the Mechanical Systems Group to plan the successful expedition. She said she thinks high school outreach is a great way to spread knowledge to a lot of students.

During one week in March, the co-ops spoke to 32 classes, reaching approximately 600 students. Each presentation was led by two co-ops and consisted of overviews and questions and answers about the history of NASA, the International Space Station, X-38, Mars missions, space shuttle, career opportunities at NASA, and college life.

Paul Brower, a co-op from Purdue, feels that he definitely reached students by participating in the program. "I can confidently say that I've made a difference in someone's life because of the program. It might mean that a student will think twice before choosing not to go to college or that someone will pay more attention in science class for just a day."



NASA JSC Photo JSC2000-02787 by Benny Benavides
Ray Ventura, left, Georgia Tech, and Kylie Moritz, Colorado State University, prepare for a student presentation at Santa Fe High School as part of the High School Outreach Program.

Several co-ops agreed that the High School Outreach Program increases the students' interest in NASA and the space program and is fun at the same time.

Christopher Ranieri from Pennsylvania State University said, "It's always fun to talk about something you love, and an

indicator that it was a success was that many students were asking how they themselves could get involved."

Jason Niebuhr from Wichita State University said that the students seemed to have gained an appreciation for what we do at JSC and now may have a greater

interest in pursuing an education that may someday bring them here.

"High school outreach helps NASA to appear more realistic to high school students and helps them realize that they too can be a part of NASA," added Althaus.

While the co-ops are involved in many projects from day to day, they felt that this program was well worth their time and effort away from their usual tasks.

Genefer Brice from the University of Idaho said, "If only one person left from the presentation with a greater desire to go to college, or with the dream of working for NASA one day, then I think it was very worth it."

According to the co-ops, this spring's High School Outreach Program was a great success. Many of them even expressed interest in participating in more outreach opportunities in the future.

Andrew Perrone, from Texas A&M, explained, "I would definitely participate in such a program again. We never know when we're going to spark someone's interest in the space program and propel them to a career at NASA or at least get them interested in math and science."

"I would want to give more presentations because support for the space program can only be obtained one classroom at a time," added Chip McCann, who is from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

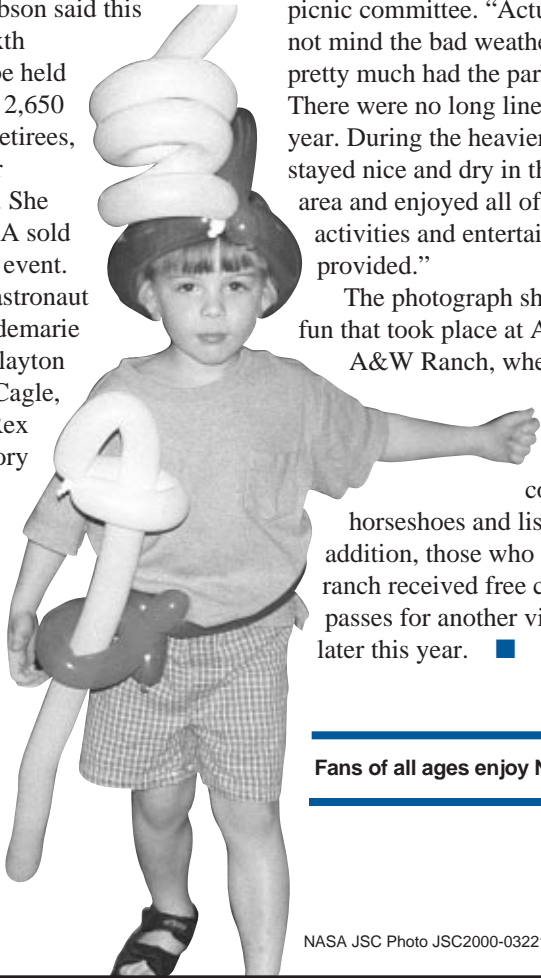
Erica Walsh from the Georgia Institute of Technology said, "I think that it's very important to reach out to high school students because most of them have no clue that it will be in their generation that space exploration will take a huge leap, and it will be because of them." ■

Thousands brave stormy weather to attend JSC Family Picnic

Tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings were not enough to keep thousands of employees from attending the NASA-JSC Family Picnic April 2 at Astroworld.

JSC Employee Activities Association President Ginger Gibson said this year's picnic, the sixth consecutive one to be held at Astroworld, drew 2,650 NASA employees, retirees, contractors and their families and friends. She reported that the EAA sold 2,951 tickets for the event.

Members of the astronaut corps including Heidemarie Stefanshyn-Piper, Clayton Anderson, Yvonne Cagle, Kenneth Cockrell, Rex Walheim, and Gregory H. Johnson were on hand to sign autographs. The Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo speakers committee entertained the crowd with singers,



a band, and a melodrama skit. Face painters and clowns were on hand.

"Though the weather didn't cooperate this year and it rained off and on all afternoon, we still had a great turnout," said Gibson, who chaired this year's picnic committee. "Actually, many did not mind the bad weather because we pretty much had the park to ourselves. There were no long lines at the rides this year. During the heavier rains, folks stayed nice and dry in the A&W Ranch area and enjoyed all of the other activities and entertainment that were provided."

The photograph shows some of the fun that took place at Astroworld's A&W Ranch, where JSC employees gathered to enjoy barbecue and each other's company, play horseshoes and listen to music. In addition, those who made it to the ranch received free complimentary passes for another visit at Astroworld later this year. ■

Fans of all ages enjoy NASA picnic.

NASA JSC Photo JSC2000-03221 by Ginger Gibson

REACHING OUT

For a second consecutive year, JSC exhibited at the Houston International Festival April 8-9 and 15-16 highlighting the center's upcoming community outreach activities.

Brazil was the festival's featured country this year and, as such, Brazilian-born Astronaut Marcos Pontes rode in the festival's Samba Parade kicking off the event. The parade was broadcast live on Channel 13. He and Astronauts Charles Camarda, Nick Patrick, and Mike Foreman signed more than 1,000 autographs throughout the event for festival visitors.

Additionally, 25 JSC volunteers distributed Open House 2000 postcard fliers, JSC bookmarks, bookcovers, and stamped children's hands with tattoos of the shuttle, astronauts, Earth, Moon and Mars.

This year's festival has been deemed the most popular in its 29-year history with an estimated total attendance of more than 500,000.



NASA JSC Photo JSC2000-12715 by James Blair
Robert Mayfield, 5, and his mother, Ramona Hoggard, get an autograph from Astronaut Nicholas J.M. Patrick.